



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

INSIDE
TRACKS

STATE DOCUMENTS COLLECTION

The Newsletter of Region One

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General Elk/Deer Season Opens October 22

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1994 Was a Record Year for Big Bulls —

Hunters during the 1995 hunting season may see fewer large bulls because of a big harvest last year, according to Region One Wildlife Biologist Bruce Sterling who works in the Thompson Falls area.

Calling 1994 a "trophy bull hunter's dream come true," Sterling noted that hunters harvested three times the number of adult bulls in the West Clark Fork hunting district in 1994 than they did in 1993. Sterling attributed the increased harvest to several factors, including a light harvest of adult bulls in previous years and good hunting conditions in 1994.

"Deep snow early in the season forced bulls down to lower elevations where they were more vulnerable than in an average year," he said.

This pattern held true region-wide, as large adult bulls made up 25 percent of the 1994 bull elk harvest, as compared to 18 percent in 1993.

Wildlife Manager Harvey Nyberg said that any drop in the number of big bulls seen by hunters this year should only be temporary, noting that younger bulls will fill in the gap within a couple of years.

According to Nyberg, the elk picture in Region One has rarely been better. "Adult bulls are still well represented in the population," he said. "We have exceeded the goal for bulls six-point and greater in every elk management unit."

Overall, hunters have enjoyed a good elk harvest over the past decade in northwest Montana. Based on harvest statistics, 1994 was better than average, with 17,413 hunters harvesting a total of 2060 elk.



A PROUD HUNTER displays the antlers and cape of a 6-point bull elk he harvested in Sanders County during the 1994 hunting season.

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Elk Harvest-Region One 1985-1994

Year	# Hunters	# Elk Harvested
1985	15,276	2,051
1986	15,432	1,855
1987	15,789	1,705
1988	15,658	2,161
1989	16,328	1,591
1990	15,890	1,653
1991	15,762	2,563
1992	16,733	1,784
1993	17,582	1,566
1994	17,413	2,060

Shotgun Expert Notes Waterfowl Hunting Tips

Nationally recognized shotgun expert Tom Roster recently visited Kalispell to hold a series of workshops on waterfowl hunting and shooting skills. The seminars, hosted by FWP, included a general workshop for hunters and two hands-on shooting clinics limited to 20 hunters each.

The workshops proved to be popular and enlightening. "It was the best thing that FWP has done, in my view," one hunter wrote. Many others agreed.

Roster is one of the nation's best-known advocates of responsible waterfowl hunting using steel shot. His enthusiasm spread to the workshop participants, even to some who felt skeptical about the effectiveness of steel as compared to lead shot, which has

been banned for waterfowl hunting because of its toxic properties in the environment.

Using intense, one-on-one shooting instruction, Roster was able to improve the shooting accuracy of each workshop participant. Clay pigeons were the targets, and Roster hovered over each shooter until he was satisfied with the shooter's technique.

Roster explained that shotgunners can shoot just as well with steel shot as they could with lead if they keep a few principles in mind:

- Steel shot is much more uniform than lead, so it forms a tighter pattern in the air. To account for this, use a more open choke to enlarge the shot pattern;

- Steel shot is less dense than lead of the same size. To achieve the same waterfowl killing power, increase the shot size to steel #3 for ducks and steel #BBB for geese. These shot sizes are recommended for best all-around performance, although different sizes may work better in specific cases.

Roster travels around the country to advocate hunter responsibility needed to maintain waterfowl hunting traditions. He endorses the following principles:

Responsible hunters

- Obey all hunting laws and regulations.
- Practice gun and water safety.
- Practice target shooting before the season.
- Select the appropriate steel shot load.
- Avoid "skybusting".
- Positively identify the target before shooting.
- Use a retriever.
- Respect the waterfowl resource, the environment, and other waterfowlers.
- "Pack their trash," including steel shot hulls.
- Don't mix guns and alcohol.
- Set high levels of ethical behavior for upcoming generations of waterfowl hunters.
- Support waterfowl, buy duck stamps!

Good Hunting!



SHOTGUN TIPS. Tom Roster (left) works with workshop participant Roy Hutchin at the Flathead Valley Clay Target Club north of Kalispell.

Kids Score at Special Friends Fishing Event

Everything seems better with a little help from your friends.

More than 40 youngsters ages 4 through 14 participated in a Special Friends outing and fishing day held recently at Woodland Park. The young anglers caught about 100 cutthroat trout (averaging 12 inches in length) which were raised at FWP's Washoe Park Hatchery in Anaconda. The Flathead Lake Hatchery supplied cold water for the event and Cenex of Kalispell supplied tanks to hold the fish.

The experience was designed to give youngsters with disabilities a chance to catch a trout. The Special Friends Advocacy Program, along with

FWP's Crossing the Barriers Committee, sponsored the event.

According to Gay Moddrell of Special Friends, the experience created "wonderful memories for the children." She said that children enjoyed fishing and many later enjoyed eating their catch. Some of the children caught their first fish ever.

Thanks to all the volunteers that made the event possible! 🐟

HAPPY PARTICIPANTS: FWP Warden Brian Sommers displays the cutthroat trout caught by young angler Laura Spohn and her mother, Sandy, at the Special Friends picnic held recently at Woodland Park.



Citizen Advisor Team Selected for Region One

Region One Supervisor Dan Vincent announced the selection of 11 volunteer citizen advisors to help FWP enhance management of fish, wildlife and parks resources in Northwest Montana.

Vincent said that it was difficult to arrive at the final selections because of the large number of fine nominees. Fifty-two people were under final consideration for the 11 posts.

The Citizen Advisor Team (in alphabetical order) includes:

Bruce Babcock, Kalispell: Taxidermist, sporting club board member, member of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation;

Theresa Conner, Columbia Falls: Parks and recreation issues, lifelong area resident and hunter, 4-H and volunteer leader, Hunter Education Instructor;

Steve Hawkins, Eureka: Outfitter, lifelong hunter, interested in wilderness issues;

Warren Illi, Kalispell: Outdoor columnist, sporting club past-president, timber issues, parks issues activist;

Tony Kastella, Whitefish: Hunter Education Lead Instructor, rifle/pistol club officer, land-use issues;

Bill Kemp, Libby: Experienced in city management, strong volunteer

background including volunteer fire department, experience with disabled folks;

Brent Mitchell, Kalispell: Audubon Society active member, strong background in environmental issues, diverse background in fish, wildlife, parks issues, National Rifle Association member, enforcement background;

Craig Phillips, Thompson Falls: Active in sporting groups, landowner/access interest, artist, volunteer wildlife work;

Ben Rossetto, Kalispell: Bowhunter Education Instructor, NRA member, avid hunter around the west, physician and leader in medical ethics field;

Rob Shrider, Ronan: License agent, Search and Rescue, 911, Flathead Reservation resident, extensive contact with the public;

Michael Ware, Kalispell: Wildlife, Hunting director for multiple use group and current president, private land/public wildlife local council, avid hunter, interpersonal skills.

The Citizen Advisors will meet with the Region One Management Team in early December to begin outlining their role.

"We applaud the commitment of these folks," Vincent said. "All of us here at FWP are enthusiastic about the project and look forward to working with the citizen advisors as a team."

Celebrate the Hunter

KEY FACTS:

- Each day, sportsmen contribute more than **\$3 million** to wildlife conservation efforts. This amounts to more than **\$1.5 billion** per year.
 - To date, hunters and fishermen have contributed a total of **over \$17 billion** for wildlife conservation.
 - Hunters contribute over **\$14 billion** to the U.S. economy each year, supporting **more than 380,000 jobs**. For every 50 hunters, enough economic activity is generated to create one job.
- Through over 10,000 private groups and organizations (such as Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation), sportsmen contribute an additional **\$300 million** each year to wildlife conservation activities.
- For every taxpayer dollar invested in wildlife conservation, sportsmen contribute **nine dollars**.

Courtesy of NSSF

WHITE-TAILED DEER

In 1900, less than half a million white-tailed deer remained in the nation. Today, conservation programs have returned the whitetail population to more than 18 million.

THEN 500,000

NOW 18,000,000



CANADA GOOSE

Habitat destruction reduced Canada goose populations to a low of some 1,110,000 in the late 1940's. Today, there are more than three times that number.

THEN 1,110,000

NOW 3,760,000



ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK

In 1907, only about 41,000 elk could be counted in the U.S. Today, populations in ten western states total approximately 800,000.

THEN 41,000

NOW 800,000



WILD TURKEY

By the early 1900s, encroaching civilization and habitat loss may have reduced the wild turkey population to under 100,000. Today, conservation programs have restored the population to some 4.5 million birds.

THEN 100,000

NOW 4,500,000



PRONGHORN ANTELOPE

About 50 years ago, the total U.S. population of pronghorn was only about 12,000. Today, conservation programs have helped increase the population to more than one million.

THEN 12,000

NOW 1,000,000



Noxon Holds First Angler Education Class

Debbie Boots of Noxon and a team of volunteers held their community's first Angler Education Class August 9-11 at the Noxon School. The course, patterned after Montana's Hunter Education Program, involves six hours of classroom instruction and one day of fishing.

In all, 19 volunteer instructors and parents contributed 132 hours to conduct the course. FWP Biologists and Wardens also assisted.

Twenty-two students age 10-12 completed the course and were certified as Young Montana Anglers.

"The program was great for the youngsters and the adults," said Boots. "There is enthusiasm to repeat the course next year."

An Instructor's Guide is now available for teaching the course. Anyone

interested in conducting a course can contact the nearest FWP Office to ar-

range for a copy of the guide, fishing equipment, and course materials.



INSTRUCTOR JIM CONLIN demonstrates spinning tackle rigs to students in the Noxon Angler Education Class.

Basic Hunting Regulations: Think Safety & Ethics

Montana's general deer and elk seasons open statewide on October 22, and FWP urges all hunters to think safety and ethics.

"The great majority of hunters obey all hunting regulations, but some common mistakes are made every year," said Warden Captain Ed Kelly. Kelly noted that these mistakes are avoidable and that all hunters should quickly review the points outlined on the first few pages of the Montana Big Game Hunting Regulations.

According to Kelly, the three most common violations are failure to properly tag a harvested animal, not stopping at check stations, and trespassing.

"Many hunters are excited when they harvest an animal and may forget to cut out the correct date on the proper tag," said Kelly. "Some hunters forget their tags. These problems are easily avoided by careful thought and planning."

Kelly highlighted the following basic regulations:

- All hunters are required to stop at all designated check stations on their way to and from hunting areas, even if there is no game to be checked.
- Any person hunting or accompa-

nying a hunter as an outfitter or guide must wear a minimum of 400 square inches of hunter orange (florescent) material above the waist, visible at all times. Bowhunters must wear 400 square inches of hunter orange when hunting in any area open to rifle hunting. Camouflage hunter orange is acceptable as long as the garment contains 400 square inches of florescent hunter orange.

- It is illegal to possess or transport the carcass of any big game animal unless evidence of the animal's sex and species remains naturally attached to the carcass. In most cases, the easiest way to meet this requirement is to leave the animal's head attached; however, if the head is removed, some other evidence such as sex organs must remain naturally attached.

- Authorized hunting hours for the taking of big game animals begins one-half hour before sunrise and ends one-half hour after sunset.

- Montana law requires that big game hunters must have permission of the landowner, lessee, or their agent before hunting big game animals on private land, whether the land is posted or not.

- Immediately after harvesting a game animal, hunters must cut out the proper month and the day of harvest from the appropriate tag and attach the tag to the animal in a visible and secure manner. If quartered the tag should remain with the carcass or largest portion of the carcass. The tag should remain with the meat until consumed.

- Hunters are prohibited from wasting any part of any game animal suitable for food (the law does not apply to black bear, grizzly bear, and mountain lion).

- Hunters are prohibited from shooting or attempting to shoot a game animal from a motorized vehicle, even if the vehicle is not moving.

- It is illegal to shoot or attempt to shoot a game animal on, from, or across a public road or from the public right-of-way.

- Hunters are prohibited from hunting or taking any game animal without a valid license on their person.

"A little thought and preparation can make the difference between a positive hunting experience and a negative one," said Kelly. "We want all of the experiences to be positive, and there's no reason why they can't be."

INSIDE TRACKS is published by Region One



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THANKS! to all the participants in the Northwest Montana Hunting Heritage Share Fair held at the Gateway West Mall in Kalispell. The event was held Sept. 23 in celebration of Montana's Hunting Heritage Week.

Participants included Flathead Wildlife, North Valley Sportsmen, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Kalispell Army Navy, Glacier Institute, United Bowhunters of Montana, Stolze Timber, Audubon, Back Country Horsemen, and Hunter Education Volunteer Instructors.

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